Vis Mediatrix Naturae, Vital Force to Innate Intelligence and Concepts for 2000.

Robert B. Jackson, DC, FICC, FACCO, (Ret)

Submit inquiries and galley proofs to:

Robert B. Jackson, D.C., F.I.C.C., F.A.C.C.O., (Ret.)
14300 Teresa Drive
Jones, OK 73049
Tel: (405) 399-5051
E-mail: rbjaxon@msn.com

Abstract

Since the days of Hippocrates, Aesculapius and Galen, healers have professed some sort of statement regarding their healing on the recuperative powers of nature in getting the patient well. The philosophical approach to healing changed in the 1700's, when chemicals were introduced into the healing process vs. natural, organic substances. Here, the Solidists, precursors of the present-day allopath, were first to reject the healing powers of nature; rather, healing occurred because of the chemicals used and had nothing to do with nature. Homeopathy held to a vital force, an *elan vital,* as aiding and abetting their diluents to establish a recovery from illness. Eclectic medicine, however, held to the healing power of nature due to their botanical and extra-body therapies. Dr. Still's osteopathy supported the healing power of nature in normalizing the body with his spinal and other bony adjustments, whereas Dr. Palmer's chiropractic used a new and different set of terms he called Innate Intelligence as a rather religious plank in his philosophy of wellness through spinal adjustments. A few teachers in early chiropractic used vital force with its subdivisions as a better way to explain how the body normalizes. The chiropractic philosophy of healing for 2000 has changed yet again, using scientific terms and philosophical facets that better explain our path to wellness.

Key indexing terms: *History of Medicines; Chiropractic*

Introduction

Vis Mediatrix Naturae - also known as *nature*, the *physis*, the *anima*, or *archeus* - meaning the reactive and curative power of the organism, was a traditional concept in healing, from the days of the great Greek physician-philosopher Hippocrates, followed by Aesculapius, some 400 years before the Christian era (1),

©2001 National University of Health Sciences

down to Galen after this era (2). Some therapeutic systems since in the history of healing have adopted an attitude toward this concept, either agreeing with or rejecting same (1).

Paracelsus (1493-1541) believed as a physician that all matter was endowed with its own spirits. Further, he concluded man possessed magnetic powers which were capable of attracting either good or evil. He taught among many things, that a "magnetic field" exudes from a person, and that it can be guided by their will, thus influencing the minds and bodies of others. He was also an alchemist who diagnosed and treated syphilis with a mercurial compound successfully for the first time. He taught that physicians should be the servant of nature, not her enemy. He taught that physicians should be able to direct nature in its struggle to maintain life and not be thrown by any unreasonable influence. Many years would pass before the teachings of Paracelsus would resurface, as would his treatment for syphilis (3).

Later, the *solidists* were first in American medicine to reject this concept, whereas the *homeopath* made it a fundamental article of doctrine, as did other America branches of healing soon to come upon the social scene, circa 1780's-1890's (1).

Throughout the eighteenth century, we find some medical thinkers congratulating themselves on the gradual liberation of medical thought from the claims of "systems and theories," and on its increasing devotion to the "facts," as other new sciences were beginning to also find. However, *vis mediatrix naturae* by theory and definition was becoming an unanalyzable function of the organism, consequently it was doomed for the trash bin of American medical history, as they were becoming more scientific in their approach (1).

The corollaries of the belief that American medicine was now growing more *factual* were 1) the tendency to deny *vis mediatrix naturae*, and 2) the belief that medical concepts were suddenly becoming more simple because of their research; therefore, unproven theories were to be abandoned. Later in the 1780's through the early 1800's, chemical and anatomical investigations became the basis for the change in attitudes, termed research methodologies in the practice of medicine for Europe and America (1)

Dr. Benjamin Rush, in his writings as a faculty member of the medical department of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia, found the twin theme of increasing simplicity and of the certainty in the *solidists*, wherein he denigrates *vis mediatrix naturae*. He credits another physician-writer, Dr. William Cullen, a fellow physician in Edinburgh, Scotland for having torn the veil away from the old concept when he gave a more rational explanation for the processes which had previously been mysteries.

Nature is always coy. Ever since she was driven from the heart, by the discovery of the circulation of the blood, she has concealed herself in the brain and nerves. Here she has been pursued by Dr. Cullen, and, if he has not dragged her into public view, he has left us a clue which must in time conduct us to her last recess in the human body. Many, however, of the operations in the nervous system have been explained by him (1).

Dr. Cullen's medical course in Edinburgh, in 1794, consisted of a curriculum of 3 years in, anatomy, chemistry, theory of medicine, practice of medicine, materia medica, botany along with hospital rounds for patient

care. In Colonial America 1794, the curriculum and course length were about the same in the Philadelphia College of Medicine-Hospital, where Dr. Benjamin Rush was on the faculty (4), and with the Homeopathic College having a similar 3-year curriculum in Philadelphia, each giving the M.D. degree (5).

Rush would also write about medical treatment, " I hope it will lead to more simplicity in the cure of fevers than has hitherto been proposed." He felt medicine was a more certain and perfect science than was commonly supposed. "To judge if its certainty by the limited nature of its usefulness is to exclude from our calculations all of the circumstances which work against a successful practice." No question in Rush's mind that, in the hands of an educated physicians such as himself, medicine was extremely safe, effective, and certain in its applications. He further believed in the principle of blood-letting, and that this should be part of the medical curriculum. He was also critical of ancient Hippocrates, for his belief in *vis mediatrix naturae*, which resulted in most of Hippocrates patients dying, in his opinion (1).

Rush further concluded, "The time I hope, will soon come, when the rejection of the powers of nature in acute and chronic diseases, and greater simplicity in pathology along with the expanding materia medica, will enable us to reverse the words of Hippocrates, to say - "That our short, or speedily acquired art, prolongs life, rather than shortens same." Dr. Rush died in 1813, but the force of his push in the reforms within *materia medica* lasted for several generations to come in American medicine. Surgeons of this period seemed to vie with each other, to see who could remove the most from a patient without the patient dying (1).

Hahnemann, on the other hand, in his *Homeopathy,* criticizes allopathic medicine as being too simplified, so that "the physician in that system will have less thinking to do and less work to do for the patient, that is why they are happy with their new doctrine. Whereas, in *Homeopathy* the physician has more to think about and more work to do in fitting the proper treatment to each patient and their condition." The *homeopathic* doctrine in contrast, welcomed the traditional concept of the healing power of nature and gave it theoretical extension by another term. "We have noted in our view of disease as an improvement of the *vital force* and considered that our remedies act upon and work with this *vital force.*

One other final difference, said Hahnemann:

Allopathic (regular) medicine recommends large doses of their chemicals as medicines, many singularly, many in combinations, which have been known to have iatrogenic lethal effects; whereas, the homeopath uses very small, infinitesimal doses, none of which have ever had any side effects and have never been lethal, to accomplish the same end; to get the patient well (5).

Allopathic medical colleges had a 3-year curriculum, as did the Hahnemann medical college in Philadelphia from 1846 through 1889. In 1890 both schools increased their curriculum to 4 years, with specialities added therein (6).

Surgeries in the eighteenth century and later were also very iatrogenic; some procedures actually saved lives, whereas most other patients died during or shortly after operations from septicemia or other complica-

tions. Many were cruel, especially those coming over from Germany with physicians in post-gold rush days to San Francisco, California, circa 1850's. Such as, if homeless young girls were found on the streets at night, were taken into police institutions as vagrants. If any were noted during the night to masturbate, they were taken the next day to one of the city's two hospitals where a clitoridectomy and the external labia were removed. Because a surgeon did it, it was socially correct! Also during this period, no insurance company would insure a doctor's wife, as usually the wives were "guinea-pigs" for their husbands to try new surgical techniques, thus allowing the wives to gossip among themselves and in the Ladies Room, to show off their scars at social medical gatherings. "The allopath extols his practice with *materia medica* as a "rational healing practice", while wishing to suppress others, who have a different concept (7)."

Comparing the *solidist* with the *homeopath* thus far in this era - *Solidists* -Diseases are entities with known causes. Diseases can be classified with respect to these causes. Symptoms are significant as indicators of cause; hence those which yield more precise information about cause are more significant for therapeutic purposes than those distantly related to the cause (1). *Hahnemann* -Disease is a derangement of the vital force. The internal cause of this derangement cannot be known. Diseases are not classified with respect to the internal cause. Diseases can be known only through their symptoms, hence all symptoms are of equal importance (5,1).

In the 1850's, Forbes, another medical critic, believed that "nature cures diseases wholly independent of any medical agency (treatment) (1). As we have seen thus far, various reasons for denying the utility of *vis mediatrix naturae* have been advanced, while others deny it. From the *Journal of American Medical Association* 36, 1901; 98 "Quackery includes not only homeopathy, eclecticism, osteopathy and others" . . .(but never allopathic medicine! - emphasis added).

Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., D.O. in his early years as a physician and a strong believer in *Spiritualism* described it "We say disease when we should say effect; for disease is the effect of a change in the parts of the physical body. *Vis mediatrix naturae* to the *osteopath* declared that disease in an abnormal body just as natural as is health when all parts are in place." (8). "Osteopathy is based on the perfection of human body parts when in line, we have health. When they are not in line, the effect is disease. When the parts are readjusted disease gives place to health. (9)."

Daniel D. Palmer also dabbled in *Spiritualism* and many other occult philosophies of his day, first began his practice as a *Magnetic Healer* in Burlington, IA, and would in years to come write rather extensively on his thoughts of these "inner forces". He termed all of the above *Innate Intelligence*. It functioned in a normal manner and amount resulting in health. Diseases are conditions resulting from either an excess or deficiency of this function.

He would write *"I am the originator, the Fountain Head of the essential principle that disease is the result of too much or not enough function - ing. I created the art of adjusting vertebrae using the spinous and transverse processes as levers, and named the mental act of accumulated*

knowledge, function, corre - sponding to the physical vege - tative function - growth of intellectual and physical - together, with the science, art and philosophy of Chiropractic (10).

"The word *Innate* and its use, as one of the principles added to Chiropractic literature, was originated by me, as were all the principles of Chiropractic. The only principle added by B. J. Palmer was that of greed and graft, aspiring to be the discoverer, developer and the fountain head of a science brought forth by his father while he was a lad in his teens," said Old Dad Chiro (10).

Innate Intelligence, known also, as Nature, Intuition, Instinct, Spirit and Subconscious mind, has duplicated senses in Educated Intelligence. "To express the individualized intelligence which runs all the functions of our bodies during our wakeful and sleeping hours, I chose the name - Innate. Innate is born within." "Chiropractors would say that Innate constructs, nourishes and keeps the whole body in form and function through the nervous system." "This is a pet theory of mine, Innate and Educated Intelligence were among my earliest Chiropractic conceptions (10)." Innate Intelligence embodies the religious plank in the foundation of Chiropractic (11).

"The time will come when Innate will analyze its own condition and Educated will recognize that determination." "The Sympathetic Nervous System is a misnomer to express the real work that such a system does. I prefer the term - Innate Nervous System," said Old Dad Chiro (10).

D.D.Palmer was well read and self educated, reading no doubt the concepts of other health related groups and chose not to mix in with those he believed held to *vis media - trix naturae or vital force,* he being different. He had to have a different concept and so he conjured up *Innate Intelligence,* his "religious plank" as part of his philosophical platform (11).

In the fall of 1905, John Fitz Alan Howard enrolled in the Palmer School of Chiropractic at Davenport, from Salt Lake City, Utah, where he had been practicing as a health therapist in a sanitarium for many years. He soon came to the conclusion that there still must be some method to go further in curing the sick by using other natural methods. This lead him into chiropractic and the Palmer School. Dr. Daniel D. Palmer was his principle teacher, with son, "B.J." just coming onto the chiropractic educational scene. During his 9-month course he witnessed the deep friction between father, son and the students, and how little B.J. really knew, yet tried to make people think he was knowledgeable. During this later part of Howard's education is when D.D. Palmer was arrested and tried for practicing medicine without a certificate, convicted and sent to jail for failing to pay his fine of $350.00; and B.J. now took over the school. During these turbulent days at PSC, Howard was the peace maker between all parties, but had little effect near the end as feelings grew so harsh between all parties, yet he still had the friendship with D.D. Palmer. His fellow student peers convinced Howard to open his own school and teach a broader concept of chiropractic which included diagnosis and the use of other treating modalities than "hands-only, spine-only" as taught by D.D. and B.J., with a philosophy that was considered "mumbo-jumbo" by many (12).

In early Spring, 1906, Dr. Howard opened his National School of Chiropractic and Institute of Adjusting in the Putnam Building- Ryan Block in downtown Davenport, Iowa. From this day on, these 2 early schools would be at loggerheads in the chiropractic educational arena as opposites in concepts, philosophy and the practice of chiropractic (12). In 1908, Howard moved his National School to Chicago, Illinois, one block from the Cook County Hospital and a few steps from the Rush Medical School. Shortly thereafter, chiropractic students were permitted to observe clinic rounds in all departments of the school and hospital, to sit in on autopsies, partake in the anatomic dissection rooms, as part of their chiropractic education. These privileges lasted up through 1924, when the American Medical Association, not far away, took aim at the chiropractic professional and began to spew their venom against the profession (12).

From the Howard Encyclopedia of Chiropractic, a collection of Dr. Howard's lectures from 1906-1912, he spoke not of Innate Intelligence, rather of a *Vital Force* with its many parts, as the philosophical basis for the type and scope of practice for his school.

Our system is as broad as Nature itself, and therefore embraces all methods which possess virtue in assisting normal function of the body; the term "Physiological Adjustment" speaks for itself; correction of body function by physiological methods. Chiropractic is but one phase of Nature's corrective agencies; hydrotherapy is another; Swedish movements is another; massage another; and suggestion yet another, and so we might enumerate all the various agencies which tend to assist nature in re-establishing normal function in the body organs . . . no matter if we should be dubbed "mixers" by narrow bigots and fanatical enthusiasts; we take it, that our duty as operators in the healing arts is to re-establish harmony in functional activities of the body. No one separate system as ALL in itself, any more than one branch of an army is sufficient to the exclusion of the others (13).

Dr. Howard also taught, among other things: To promote and develop the straight truthful aspects of a science-based chiropractic philosophy; To improve chiropractic adjustive techniques; To frankly acknowledge the necessity of diagnosis in the practice of chiropractic; To deny the "one-cause, one-cure" concept as taught by the Palmer School (12).

Dr. Howard also lead the vanguard in his day that chiropractic was a holistic, drugless therapeutic philosophy, science and art centered about the chiropractic adjustment (12), from which the founders of Lincoln Chiropractic College in Indianapolis, Indiana, Drs. Veddar, Hendricks, King and Firth likewise used as the basis for their school (14). Dr. Joseph Janse, president and dean of the National College of Chiropractic in Chicago in 1947, used Howard's principles of philosophy when he published his text Chiropractic Principles and Technique, used by many other chiropractic colleges in the post-war era across America (15).

Recent philosophical concepts in chiropractic have emerged at the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic (LACC) by a Task Forced headed by President Reed B. Phillips, D.C., Ph.D., a graduate of the National College of Chiropractic under Dr. Joseph Janse; Ian D. Coulter, Ph.D.; Alan Adams, D.C.; Al Traina, D.C. and John

Beckman, Ed.D., and others who have announced a philosophy for LACC in modern times. Taken from Vitalism, Holism, Naturalism, Therapeutic Conservationism, Critical Rationalism and Experimental Philosophies. "The net effect is a logical set of beliefs which appeal to common sense (and) uses scientific terminology, yet promotes a natural, non-invasive, holistic, personal approach with compassion for the patient, healing process (14)."

From LACC's philosophy we have more than *Vis Mediatrix Naturae* of old, but a philosophy including *Vis Mediatrix Naturae* and other holistic philosophies for 2000, and beyond.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to my friend, William S. Rehm, D.C. for his critique and encouragement to proceed with this project.

References

1. Coulter HL. Divided legacy: a history of the schisms in medical thought. Volume III: Science and ethics in American medicine - 1810-1914; Washington, DC: McGrath Publishing Co.,1973

2. Green RM. Galen's hygiene. Spriungfield, IL: Charles. C. Thomas Publishers, 1951

3. Gielow V. Old dad chiro; Davenport, IA: Palmer College of Chiropractic, 1988

4. Miller G. Medical education in colonial America; Ciba Symposia 1947;8

5. Hahnemann S. Organan of the art of healing; 6th edition. Philadelphia, PA: Boericke and Tafel, 1900

6. Bradfore T. History of Hahnmann Medical College. Philadelphia, PA: Hahnemann Press, 1899

7. Harris H. California's medical story. Springfield, IL: Charles. C. Thomas Publishers, 1932

8. Northrup GW. Osteopathic medicine: an American reformation, 2nd edition. Chicago. IL: American Osteopathic Association, 1970

9. Still AT. Osteopathic research and practice. Self published.

10. Palmer DD. The science, art and philosophy of chiropractic. Portland, OR: Portland Printing House Co., 1910

11. Donahue J. D.D. Palmer and innate intelligence: development, division and derision, Chiropr History 1986;6:32-36

12. Beideman RP. The role of the encyclopedic Howard system in the professionalization of chiropractic: National College, 1906-1981; *Chiropr History* 1996;16:29-41

13. Howard JFA. Howard encyclopedia of chiropractic, volume II; 341. Chicago, IL: National School of Chiropractic, 1912.

14. Firth JN. Chiropractic diagnosis. Self published, 1948.

15. Janse F, Houser A, Wells BF. Chiropractic principles and technique. Chicago, IL; National College of Chiropractic, 1947

16. Phillips RB, Coulter I, Adams A, Triana A, Beckman J. Contemporary philosophy of chiropractic for the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic. *J Chiropr Humanities* 1994: 4; 20-25